

DHSS Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program Seeks Donors to Provide Gifts for Delaware Children, Families and Seniors in Need

NEW CASTLE (Nov. 19, 2019) – The Department of Health and Social Services' Adopt-A-Family Holiday program is seeking donors to help make this holiday season a happier one for thousands of children, adults, people with disabilities and seniors in need across Delaware.

The Adopt-A-Family Holiday program anonymously matches donors to seniors, individuals with disabilities or families with children. In 2018, the Holiday Adopt-A-Family program, through the leadership of the Human Services Council, Inc., helped 2,548 Delawareans.

"The Adopt-A-Family Holiday program is a great way for Delawareans to reach out and lift the spirits of those in need during the holidays," Governor John Carney said. "Please take a moment to consider making a donation. By giving back, we can help make the holidays happier for our fellow Delawareans."

The deadline to "adopt" families with children is Dec. 6, and all gift cards must be delivered to the Adopt-A-Family office by Dec. 13. The deadline to deliver gifts for seniors and persons with disabilities to the Adopt-A-Family office is Dec. 6.

Adopt-A-Family provides donors with the age and gender of each child in the family and a brief description of the circumstances that led to their need for assistance. The sponsor then provides gift cards for the head-of-household to

use to purchase holiday gifts. The recommended minimum gift is \$100 per child, with a gift card for the parent/guardian optional but thoughtful.

Those interested in adopting seniors or persons with disabilities will be matched to an individual who is living in a nursing home or someone who is living alone and receiving in-home care services. A wish list of items that the individual enjoys, needs, or would appreciate, as well as clothing preferences and sizes, will be provided.

"Each year, I am grateful for the generous spirit of Delawareans as they embrace their neighbors in need," said Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker. "During the holidays, there is no better gift we can give than to offer our support to those individuals and families who are facing crises in their lives."

Families who are "adopted" are contacted by Adopt-A-Family to pick up their gift cards from the Adopt-A-Family office. Eligible recipients are referred to Adopt-A-Family by social workers from social service agencies throughout the state.

"Each year we find that many of our neighbors in need are referred to Adopt-A-Family through our State Service Centers and other organizations, because of serious medical conditions, behavioral health challenges, domestic violence, homelessness and unemployment," said Renée P. Beaman, Director of DHSS' Division of State Service Centers, which operates the program. "The stories of those in need are poignant, and I am hopeful that my fellow Delawareans will respond generously."

These circumstances are a sample of the hundreds of individuals and families available for adoption this season:

- This family experienced a fire in 2017 and lost everything. Since then they have not been able to recover financially. The mother is unable to find

employment and no longer is receiving child support. She also recently separated from her fiancé, who was the main support for the family.

- This single mother has been hospitalized multiple times throughout the year due to having a serious cardiac condition. She is on disability permanently due to how severe it is and is raising her daughter with no help.
- This client has guardianship of her granddaughter and nephew. She is sickly and has been a victim of domestic violence and, up until recently, has been homeless. Thankfully, she now has a place to live, but the majority of her unearned income goes to her rent. She shares that the children in her care barely have anything, which is especially hard on the oldest girl.

This year, Adopt-Family Holiday has an online platform for “adopting” families. Those interested in using the platform can scroll through a list of available families and choose a family they would like to “adopt” by Friday, Dec. 6. Those webpages are:

- New Castle County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafnewcastle2019>
- Kent County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafkent2019>
- Sussex County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafsussex2019>

To “adopt” an individual or family, please contact:

- New Castle County: New Castle County Adopt-A-Family at 302-792-6510 or email AdoptafamilyNC2@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 3301 Green St., Claymont, DE 19703
- Kent and Sussex counties: Kent and Sussex Adopt-A-Family at 302-424-7260 or email Adopt-a-family-ks@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 13 SW Front St., Milford, DE 19963

When donors are matched with an individual or family, they will be given a code to include with the gift cards or items when they drop them off so the Adopt-A-Family staff knows who should receive the items. Items may be dropped off at Adopt-A-Family offices in New Castle County (3301 Green St., Claymont) or Kent and Sussex counties (13 SW Front St., Milford).

Gift cards may be mailed to either Adopt-A-Family office. If choosing this option, please include the family code provided by Adopt-A-Family staff in the shipping address when mailing the gift cards. If you would prefer to drop the gift cards off in person, hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please contact the Adopt-A-Family office if you need alternative delivery arrangements.

The Adopt-A-Family program aids families in crisis – those struggling with illness, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty or unemployment – throughout the year. The program was started in 1973 by Marge Meyerman and is coordinated by the Division of State Service Centers in all three counties.

For more information about Adopt-A-Family, go to the website or contact your nearest state service center.